

## CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Walking and bicycling are popular activities in Fauquier County for both recreation and transportation. Greenways contribute significantly to the quality of life, and protect the County's natural resources. An increasing number of residents have expressed a desire to preserve greenways and open space throughout the County, in order to provide safer places to bicycle and walk. The County has a rich heritage of horseback riding activities and events, including horse show competitions and hunts, and canoeing has become an increasingly popular activity among many county residents.

In many places in the County, these activities are difficult. The greenway network is in its very early stages of development, and multi-use pathways are discontinuous. There are few paved shoulders or bike lanes, therefore bicycling is often not a safe or convenient option.

This Plan identifies locations that are in need of greenways and bikeway improvements, and identifies a number of actions that need to be taken to ensure that future land preservation efforts, development, and road construction addresses the need for greenways and safer pedestrian and bicycle movement within and between the Service Districts.

### Why are Greenways, Bikeways and Walkways Important to Fauquier County?

These issues are important to Fauquier County residents for a number of reasons:

*Greenways are critical to the future preservation of sensitive ecological lands and the rural heritage of Fauquier County.*

By protecting open space areas and greenways along the County's stream and river corridors, water quality can be greatly improved in Fauquier County's streams, the Rappahannock River and Chesapeake Bay. Preservation of these lands can - in some cases - serve a dual purpose of benefiting our residents by providing areas where they can walk, bicycle or paddle a boat for health and recreation.

*Walking and bicycling can play a vital role in improving the health of residents of Fauquier County.*

Residents of Fauquier County need opportunities to exercise in order to improve their health. In Virginia, the prevalence of obesity increased by 100% between 1991 and 2001.

### Important Definitions

#### Greenway:

*A greenway is a corridor of open space. Greenways vary greatly in scale, from narrow ribbons of green that run through a variety of landscapes, to wider corridors that incorporate diverse natural, cultural and scenic features. They can be land- or water-based, and may follow old railways, ridge tops, stream corridors, shorelines or wetlands. Some greenways are recreational corridors that may accommodate non-motorized users. Others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not designed for human passage.*

Derived from the Pennsylvania Greenways Action Plan, 2001

#### Multi-Use Trail:

*Multi-use trails are separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier and located either within the highway right-of-way (often termed "parallel shared use path") or within an independent right-of-way. Trails may also be used by pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, hikers, people with baby strollers and a wide variety of other non-motorized users. In some cases, shared use paths also accommodate equestrians.*

#### Sidewalk:

*That portion of a highway, road or street specifically constructed for the use of pedestrians on the outside edge of the vehicular travel way. Sidewalks are typically, but not always, curb-separated from the roadway and made of concrete, brick, asphalt or another hard surface materials.*

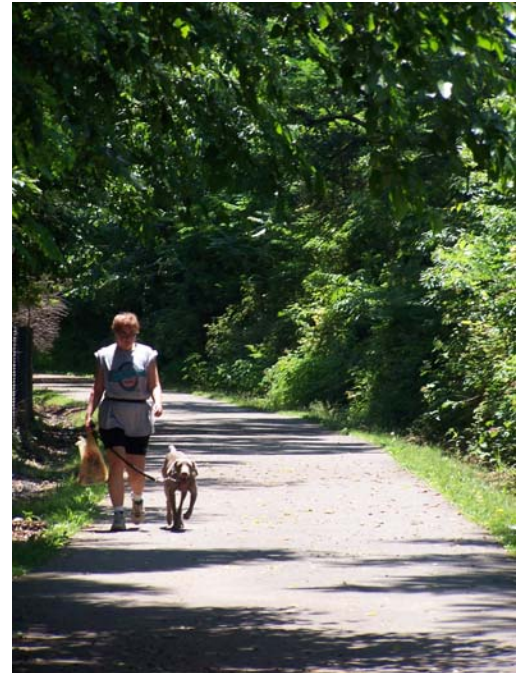
Problems associated with overweight and obesity including heart disease, diabetes, and a host of other illnesses can be avoided by getting a short, 15-minute bike ride or brisk walk twice per day. County residents are concerned about health issues and need close-to-home opportunities to get their daily exercise.

*Walking and bicycling in Fauquier County can help to reduce traffic congestion, while also providing a recreational resource.*

Walking for fitness or recreation has consistently been ranked as the number one outdoor recreational activity by U.S. adults for the past decade, and bicycling has been consistently ranked among the top ten activities. The popularity of these outdoor activities can be seen along the Warrenton Branch Greenway, which receives an average of 89,000 visitors each year. Residents of Fauquier County need an alternative mode of travel for short trips - which account for nearly half of all daily trips that are taken in the County.

*Preserving greenways and bikeways network makes good economic sense for Fauquier County.*

Bicycle touring is a low impact activity that can bring dollars to many small town businesses, museums, and other cultural institutions, but does not generate overwhelming numbers of cars or people.



The Warrenton Branch Greenway - an outstanding resource that draws 89,000 visitors per year.

## Summary of Vision and Goals

Fauquier County's vision for walking and bicycling provides the public, elected officials, county staff, and others a clear picture of the future network. The specific goals speak directly to particular areas that need action. Together they provide a solid framework for the recommended actions in this Plan.

### Vision Statement:

*Fauquier County will become a place:*

- ◇ *where multi-use trails and greenways serve a dual purpose as recreation and transportation corridors and serve to preserve open space, and;*
- ◇ *where people have the convenient and safe option of traveling on foot and by bicycle throughout the County for recreation and transportation.*

To realize this Vision, the following five goals were established:

*GOAL 1: Develop a county-wide walkway, bikeway and greenway network among residential neighborhoods, Towns, workplaces, shopping centers, historic districts, schools, libraries, recreation centers, parks, etc.*

*GOAL 2: Preserve and protect the environmental quality of Fauquier County's rural, suburban and urban communities through the preservation of greenways and open space corridors.*

*GOAL 3: Provide opportunities for a great many county residents who desire to walk, bicycle, ride horses and paddle boats for recreation and health.*

*GOAL 4: Educate business and community leaders and the general public about the benefits of walking and bicycling, and provide safety messages for people who use the system.*

*Goal 5: Provide adequate funding to develop and maintain a seamless network of facilities.*



## Key Recommendations of the Plan

This Plan recommends the construction of a physical network of greenways, bikeways and sidewalks, as well as a variety of programs and policies that are needed to achieve the vision and goals identified above. Detailed recommendations are provided in Chapters 5 and 6. Below is a summary of the key recommendations of the Plan:

### **ACTION 1: Network of Multi-Use Trails, Blueways, Horse Trails, Bikeways and Sidewalks**

This Plan recommends a comprehensive network of multi-use trails that will be located within the Service Districts of the County. The proposed locations within the Service Districts have been carefully considered and have undergone a citizen-driven review process (see pages 32-33 for a more detailed description of this process).

The maps that are located inside the back cover of this Plan show the specific locations of proposed trails within the Service Districts. It is important to note that future revisions to this Plan will be necessary in order to facilitate a more in depth discussion regarding trail connections *between* the Service Districts.

At the present time, multi-use trails are supported in the language of the Comprehensive Plan but are not adequately supported by the detailed regulations that control development within the County. *As a result, there is little practical guidance on how to design multi-use trails, bikeways and sidewalks in the County.*

Chapter 5 identifies a variety of actions needed to ensure that new developments (both commercial and residential) are safe for walking and bicycling, and that multi-use trails and bikeways identified in this Plan (and in Service District plans) are constructed during development projects. The following specific recommendations support this action:

- 2A: County and municipal staff should require future developers to construct multi-use trails and greenways as identified in this Plan and Service District Plans, and that they dedicate these corridors to the County for public use.
- 2B: The County should adopt the standards of the Parks and Recreation Department for multi-use trails, sidewalks, bikeways, blueways, etc., and revise local subdivision ordinances and roadway design standards accordingly.

#### **ACTION 2: Land Preservation**

Private landowners in Fauquier County should be invited to participate in the greenway program primarily through voluntary measures and incentives, many of which already exist through the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, conservation easements, and agricultural districts. Additional incentives should be provided to encourage smaller land owners to participate.

Chapter 5 also recommends that the County provide user-friendly information on the wide variety of land preservation programs for citizens and developers, and publicize incentives to preserving greenways and open space.

#### **ACTION 3: School Policies**

Walking and bicycling to school is an activity that many generations of children were able to do in the past. In recent years, however, some schools in Fauquier County have taken steps to discourage, and in some cases prohibit children from walking and bicycling to school due to concerns about safety. As walking and bicycling conditions improve in the future it will be important to re-examine these policies. A good example of this is William C. Taylor Middle School, which has a direct connection to the Warrenton Branch Greenway - students could easily use the trail to safely access school. This action addresses the need to make conditions safer for students traveling to and from school.





#### **ACTION 4: Institutional Framework**

This action addresses the need for continued oversight and coordination to insure successful implementation of this Plan. Chapter 5 identifies an institutional framework that will be needed to implement the recommendations of this Plan. The following specific activities are recommended:

- 4A: Establish a trail staff person in the Parks and Recreation Department to oversee the planning and design of proposed greenways and trails throughout the County, and to work with developers and homeowners associations to ensure that good quality trails are built as part of the development process, to coordinate the efforts of local jurisdictions and other County government agencies, and to prepare grant applications for the myriad of grant opportunities available for these types of projects in Virginia (see job description in Chapter 5, Recommendation 4A).
- 4B: Establish a county-wide coordination committee responsible for coordinating the implementation of this Plan.
- 4C: In the future, address planning needs for connections between the Service Districts.

#### **ACTION 5: Additional Sources of Funding**

Although the majority of the proposed network will be built through the development process, there will be gaps in the network in both the short term and long term that will need special funding in order to complete. This action addresses the need to identify additional sources of funding, both through grants and the capital budget, in order to establish a continuous network.

#### **ACTION 6: Maintenance and Management**

While Fauquier County owns only portions of the trail network and does not manage the roadway system, ensuring good maintenance will require coordination with a variety of other parties. Chapter 5 identifies actions that will be needed in order to coordinate the maintenance and management of the pedestrian and bicycle network. It also identifies the need to establish guidelines for trail user etiquette in order to reduce conflicts between the many different types of users who will enjoy future Fauquier County Trails.

#### **ACTION 7: Safety Education**

Chapter 6 identifies a number of resources that will be helpful in establishing pedestrian and bicycle safety education for all ages, as well as for motorists who should be taught to use caution at trail and sidewalk crossings. Specifically, bicycle and pedestrian safety curricula

should be implemented in elementary and middle schools throughout the County. The County should work with the health and P.E. coordinator for Fauquier County Public Schools to conduct additional research into the program and gain the involvement of local schools.

**ACTION 8: Safe Routes to School**

The environmental, social, health, traffic safety and direct costs of a system that delivers most students to school via school buses and personal automobiles are significant. While increasing the numbers of students that bicycle and walk to school can help mitigate the negative impacts of the current system, safe routes to school must be created before parents and school officials will feel comfortable encouraging students to use them. Chapter 6 identifies a number of actions that can be taken to launch a pilot Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in Fauquier County. These programs have been highly successful in other Virginia jurisdictions and throughout the U.S.

**ACTION 9: Encouragement Programs**

Community-wide encouragement and advocacy for walking and bicycling can be achieved through events, ongoing programs, and town- or county-sponsored initiatives. Chapter 6 identifies a number of specific activities that can be undertaken to encourage walking and bicycling for fun and fitness.

**ACTION 10: Employee Commute Programs**

Fauquier County should encourage bicycle commuting by participating in Bike-to-Work Day, and by providing information to employers and employees. This action recommends that public agencies in Fauquier County become model employers: providing monetary bike/walk commute incentives, showers and lockers for employees, and "Guaranteed Ride Home" policies for emergencies and inclement weather.

**ACTION 11: Training for Agency Staff**

Pedestrian and bicycle design is a new field of study that will require background training for local agency staff who are responsible for development reviews and for coordinating with VDOT on transportation projects. This type of training has been conducted in other Virginia cities and counties, and has been funded by VDOT in the past.

**ACTION 12: Enforcement**

It will be important in the future to improve enforcement of laws concerning the safe interaction of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in shared environments. Education should be provided to law enforcement officers to encourage them to reinforce laws as they apply to aggressive motor vehicle behavior toward bicyclists and pedestrians. Pedestrians and bicyclists should be educated to follow the rules of the

road as well. Chapter 6 identifies a number of steps that should be taken to ensure this occurs.

### **ACTION 13: Access to Future Transit Services**

While Fauquier County's current transit service is limited mainly to shuttle buses and vanpool, a number of transit proposals have been discussed in recent years. In all future transit projects, convenient and safe pedestrian and bicycle access should be a top priority. Chapter 6 identifies a number of measures that should be taken if transit services are increased in Fauquier County in the future.

### **Implementation Plan**

The establishment of a regional network of multi-use trails and bikeways in Fauquier County will require a partnership among the county, local jurisdictions and the state. New greenway trails, multi-use pathways that extend along roadways, and sidewalk projects will need to be coordinated through various funding programs, including the Six Year Transportation Improvement Program. Chapter 7 identifies a number of funding programs that should be aggressively pursued in order to fund the implementation of this Plan.

It is important to note that future revisions to this Plan will be necessary in order to facilitate a more in depth discussion regarding trail connections between Service Districts.

### **County Approval Process**

The Board of the Parks and Recreation Department is hopeful that this plan is include as and approved section of the County's Comprehensive Plan. In order to accomplish this objective the following steps must be completed:

1. An in-depth review by the Parks and Recreation Board, County Administrator, County Attorney and the Planning Commission. Public hearing for input would be held by the Parks & Recreation Board and Planning Commission. Revision as needed after this input and review process.
2. Acceptance by the Planning Commission for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan and forwarding on to the Board of Supervisors
3. Review by the Board of Supervisors and completion of revisions from this review.
4. Acceptance by the Board of Supervisors for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan.

Next steps:

1. Inclusion of trail design standards per the standards recommended herein and any available County standards.
2. Possible amendment to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances to add trail standards and specifications.

3. Pursuit of additional funding sources as needed to augment developer-financed trails, bikeways and sidewalks.